



Stories from service: A sociocultural analysis of how stories are used and transformed in cognitively challenging reflection

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Summary

This presentation reports findings from a qualitative, sociocultural study that demonstrates how a combination of teacher comments and exposure to counterexamples during reflection led to the transformation of the stories students told about their service experience.

The data and analysis in this presentation focus on in-class and written reflections that are part of a larger, qualitative examination of a service learning class at an independent Quaker school in a large eastern American city. In the class, 10th grade students tutored 1st graders in a nearby public school. The larger study seeks to answer the question: How do students taking a service learning class learn about public issues, public actions, and the perspectives of others? As a part of this research the author was a participant observer during all class activities; video recorded all non-service activities; interviewed

students before, during, and after the course; and collected all written work by 10th grade students. This data was analyzed for themes according to a sociocultural framework.

Stories were transformed through two interacting mechanisms: teacher comments and counterexamples. Teachers would offer critiques and suggest that students consider other perspectives. A combination of teacher comments and exposure to counterexamples led to the transformation of the stories students told about their service experience.

Practitioners seeking to develop cognitively challenging reflection activities must balance teacher voice and opportunities for students to share their own stories. While teacher commentary plays a role in the transformation of these stories, the counterexamples from others stories of service most likely become incorporated students' stories about their service experience. The presentation will contain two examples of stories of service transformed through reflection.

References